





GAME BIRDS and ANIMALS
OF
MANITOBA



PROVINCE OF MANITOBA
CANADA

1945



During the past two decades there has been witnessed on this continent a marked increase in the study of wild life. Sportsmen, conservationists, students of natural history, and outdoor enthusiasts generally have led the way. They have labored unstintingly to stimulate public interest and to make available to everyone the latest information concerning the variety and importance of a most valuable resource.

Much of this awakened interest has focussed on Canada, for this country still has large areas in which wild life thrives relatively unmolested. As part of this great wild life region, Manitoba has in turn felt the growing demand for more data on its natural game bird and animal wealth.

It is no accident that Manitoba possesses fine migratory bird, big game and upland bird resources. Northern Manitoba forests and marshes form a vast preserve for big game and many types of game birds. The southern areas of the Province consist in part of prairie uplands which as hunting grounds are praised by resident and non-resident alike. Manitoba's breeding and feeding grounds play host year after year to millions of ducks and geese. Both the Atlantic and Central flyways traverse Manitoba and the Province is in the very centre of the Mississippi flyway.

It is to emphasize the varied nature of these resources that this book has been issued. Through its pages, residents of Manitoba and those from other parts of Canada and from the United States may become better acquainted with Manitoba's wild game. Our young citizens who will be tomorrow's sportsmen, tomorrow's natural scientists, and tomorrow's conservationists may find in this book an introduction to the fascinating world of wildlife that awaits their exploration.

But there is another purpose that this book may serve. It, in indicating the extent of our game resources it also plants firmly in the reader's mind the resolve that those resources must not be wantonly destroyed, that, on the contrary, they must be protected, maintained, and wisely used, it will have made a significant contribution to the life of the Province.

It is in this expectation that "The Game Birds and Animals of Manitoba" has been published by the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources.

Compendium

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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PREFACE

An attempt has been made in this book to bring together pertinent information and illustrations concerning some of the more common game birds and animals found in Manitoba. The aim has been to produce neither a technical treatise nor a mere catalogue but rather a brief descriptive record having permanent value for the avocet sportsman and nature lover.

In preparing this book it was interesting to recall the successive changing attitudes towards wild life during the past. Birds and animals must first have appeared to man as enemies to be overcome, Destroy or be destroyed was a maxim nature daily forced him to observe. Game whether animal or bird was perhaps his only staple food during centuries of early time and the hides of animals his only protection against the elements. In those distant days hunting was a vital condition of life as it still is in this country for thousands of Indians and Eskimos.

Gradually man found new sources of food. He domesticated animals to work for him and to provide the raw material for cloth to protect his body. Life became easier and the race multiplied. Civilization developed new techniques of living and of killing. On this continent the crushing tide forced wild animal life further and further into the forest. Wild game was at a disadvantage when confronted with a foe using fortifying and accurate new weapons. Many species died out altogether.

As a result many areas throughout the continent have been driven to the position of having now to adopt the most stringent conservation measures. The Province of Manitoba had been more fortunate than most regions for large tracts of its lands have not felt the pressures of mounting population and much of its wild life lives relatively unmolested. But in many other parts of North America it is often a different story. Regions as favored as Manitoba are becoming fewer and they are shrinking in size.

Thus our general attitude towards wild life has experienced a transformation over the years. Rather than as enemies to be destroyed or as a staple source of food there was a time when many considered game animals and birds to be the objects of unregulated hunting sport. Today we no longer hold those views. We realize that wild life resources are part of a heritage which must not be squandered. We know that if we protect and manage these resources effectively they will continue to provide us and those who come after us with the hunting sport and with the unique pleasure that springs from observation, study and understanding of wild life.

PREFACE Continued

To achieve this end we must strengthen the successful partnership of the government on one hand and the individual citizens on the other. For its part the government of the Province feels that it can best cooperate by maintaining its present activity in four main fields: first by providing field officers to report on wild life conditions throughout the Province, to administer the game laws locally, and in general to serve the interests of game management and protection; second, by continuing its extensive program of marsh reclamation which has added many thousands to Manitoba's annual waterfowl population during the past ten years; third, by maintaining and administering provincial game preserves which are havens for wild life; fourth, by expanding its facilities for providing information on the extent and condition of Manitoba's wild life resources.

Citizens of Manitoba and visitors to the Province may do their part by cooperating with the government in observing the game laws and by maintaining high standards of sportsmanship. Above all hunters should encourage the spread of a new conception of their sport a conception which has increased in currency during the past few years particularly with regard to waterfowl shooting. Many hunters realize that modern conditions prevent the kind of "fast and loose" shooting their fathers enjoyed. Extensive agricultural settlement, better weapons, an increase in the number of hunters and their ability to travel farther in search of good areas have all tended to make more and more difficult the survival of migratory waterfowl in numbers sufficient to satisfy everyone.

Many sportsmen have therefore become less the devotees of the daily bag limit and more the skilled hunters seeking only the most difficult shots and endeavouring to get the greatest amount of recreational satisfaction from each bird taken. These are the true sportsmen. An increase in their number would be a boon to the cause of hunting sport in the Province.

Careful conservation combined with this conception of sportsmanship will give our wild life a better opportunity to maintain a satisfactory rate of increase and will provide maximum enjoyment for hunters not only for the present but for generations to come.

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PART ONE

GAME BIRDS

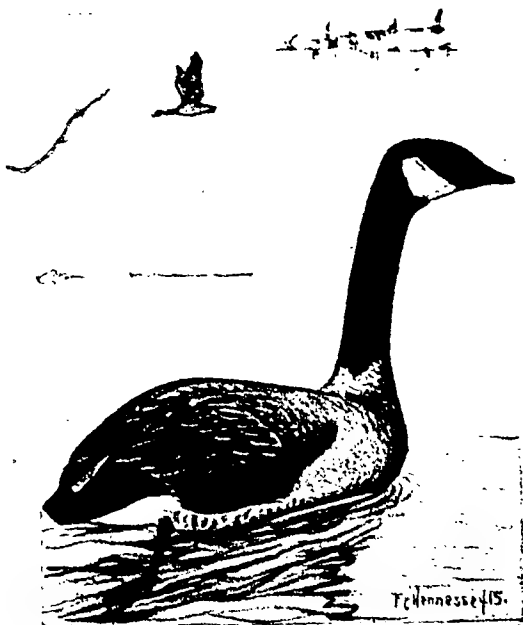
INTRODUCTION

Although the tantalizing vision of golden-brown roast duck or fried prairie chicken is one of the strongest incentives to the study of game bird habits, many thousands of game bird enthusiasts hunt only on rare occasions. For them the appeal is one so universal that it has been known in every age and in every part of the world. It is deeply rooted in the desire to understand the mystery surrounding the living things that share the world with us, rooted also, perhaps, in the delight of discovering parallels between our own life and that of birds.

What onlooker has not felt the sense of ease and power in the flight of the Canada Goose? Whether hunter or non-hunter, he finds that game birds have a powerful aesthetic attraction. The brilliant plumage of the Wood Duck, Pheasant and Mallard and the swift flight of Canvas-back and Teal fill him with a delight he may not be able to explain but which is none the less real. The courage of the game birds, even in the face of all man's skill and inventive energy, never fails to arouse his profound respect.

The true hunter or conservationist balances many factors in his final appraisal of game bird life. Have the birds an economic importance aside from sport? He will learn, among other things, that many of them are voracious devourers of grasshoppers and mosquito larvae. What factors decrease their numbers? He will recall the depletion of all wild life during the drought years of the thirties. And he will read how some North American birds have been hunted to extinction. Perhaps he will have seen at first hand the destruction of nests and eggs by fox, coyote and crow, and ducklings by fish. How may the game bird population be increased? He may himself resolve to be a more considerate hunter, to support government conservation programs, and to spread appreciation of the value of Manitoba's game bird resources among his friends.

With this knowledge prompting greater understanding on the part of thousands of men and women and their children, game birds will experience a more abundant life in Manitoba, and citizens a greater enjoyment of that life which they helped to make possible.



CANADA GOOSE

Common to abundant in migration to and from its northern nesting grounds; breeds sparingly in the south. Length 32-39 inches; wingspread 59-76 inches; weight 8-14 pounds. Speed records, 40-60 m.p.h.; age record, 47 years; nest on ground, rarely in old nests of other birds in trees; eggs 5-9; incubation period 28-30 days.

Known and respected by hunters everywhere as a wise and wary bird, the Honker is the aristocrat of the migratory bird world. Its keen sight and acute ear make it an extremely difficult bird to outwit.

The Canada Goose mates for life and has a highly developed sense of fidelity to its mate and to the flock. When feeding, the geese post sentries to warn the flock of danger. These sentinels remain alert, their long black necks thrust high in the air.

The Honker is brownish-grey in color, except for the shiny, black head and neck and white cheek patches. First to feel the migratory wanderlust, Canada Geese provide an impressive wild life spectacle when their big V-shaped flocks pass high overhead. Hunters have always been fascinated by the loud familiar cries of "honk, honk, honk," drifting down through the crisp air of early spring or autumn.

Second only to the Swan in size, the common Canada Goose has been known to reach 22 pounds in weight, a bird of that size having been taken at North Shoal Lake, Manitoba, in 1943.

LESSER CANADA GOOSE

Length 25-30 inches; wingspread 52-61 inches; weight 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ -7 pounds.

This subspecies of the Canada Goose is probably the most numerous goose on the Prairies. For this reason and because of its excellent table qualities, the Lesser Canada Goose has always been a favorite with Manitoba hunters. It cannot of course compare, either in size or as food, with the common Canada Goose. Often called the "short-necked" goose because of a neck that is shorter in proportion to its body in comparison with other geese, it nevertheless has habits similar to the king of its species, the Honker.

RICHARDSON'S GOOSE

Length 22-28 inches; weight 3-6 pounds.

This small goose breeds far north in the Arctic and is taken in large numbers throughout the summer by the Eskimos. When migrating south, it passes through southern Manitoba and continues through the mid-western States to its wintering grounds along the north-western coast to the Gulf of Mexico. In appearance this goose closely resembles both the Common Canada Goose and Lesser Canada Goose in coloration, though it is, of course, a smaller bird. The voice of the Richardson's Goose is a trill-like sound breaking off to a cackle.

BLUE GOOSE

While not as abundant as the Lesser Snow Goose, the Blue Goose migrates north in immense numbers in spring to its Arctic breeding grounds.

It is a grey-brown goose with white head and neck, and pink feet and bill. Almost the entire Blue Goose population pours into Manitoba in the spring, for the most part concentrating west and northwest of Winnipeg. Sometimes they remain in the Province for as long as a month. Then they take to flight again on the second great lap of their migration to the Arctic. Few flocks appear in the fall.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

While this species occurs in Manitoba as a migrant both in spring and fall, its numbers are not large. In general it may be described as a grey-brown goose with dark head which has a white band around the base of the bill. It is a medium-sized goose.

ROSS'S GOOSE

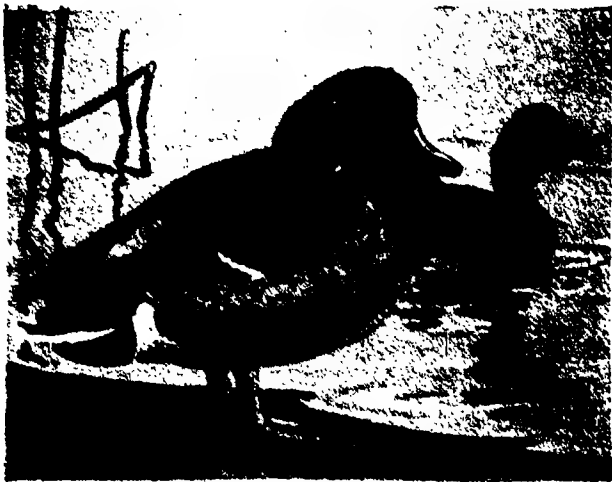
This goose is a miniature edition of the Lesser Snow Goose. Although much smaller, its plumage is almost identical, being completely white but for the black wing tips. Its occurrence in Manitoba is rare and considered by many accidental.



LESSER SNOW GOOSE

Maximum nesting in the Far North. Length 26.5 inches, wing spread 33.25 inches, weight 16.5 pounds. Mated second or third of winter. Live about 10 years. Nest on ground, eggs 6. incubation period 28-29 days.

Accompanied by Blue Goose, Lesser Snow Goose migrate through Manitoba in enormous flocks in the spring. It is among the most numerous of all geese. Its plumage is similar to the Ross's Goose, being entirely white except for black wing tips. The Lesser Snow Goose, or 'Wavy' as it is commonly called, is popular with hunters because of its large size. Many hold the opinion that its flesh does not measure up to that of the various species of Canada Goose.



MALLARD

Extremely abundant migrant and breeding species. Length 20-28 inches; wingspread 37-39½ inches; weight 2-3½ pounds; speed of flight 57-60 m.p.h.; age reached 1½ years; nest on ground (rarely in trees); eggs 5-14; incubation period 26-27 days.

Nesting in every pothole, slough and marsh, the Mallard is the most popular bird with the majority of sportsmen. As well as frequenting marshes, it provides plenty of stubble shooting. The drake with its glossy green head, white collar, brown back and grey and white breast can hardly be mistaken for any other wild duck. The female is also easily recognized by its white-barred wing pattern and the whiteness of the tail in flight. When taking flight it rises almost vertically from the water. The female has a loud, harsh, resonant quack; the male has a softer note. The Mallard's food is predominantly vegetable, varied, however, to include insects and aquatic animals in addition to water plants and seeds. Larvae of mosquitoes are destroyed in great numbers by the Mallard. It is also very fond of grain.

The Mallard has been known to cross with many other species, including the Pintail, Baldpate, Green-winged Teal and Gadwall.



BLACK DUCK

Migrant not known to breed in Manitoba. Length 27 inches. Weight 24.3½ pounds. Nests on ground near water. Eggs 89 incubation period 26-28 days. Recorded speed of flight 20 m.p.h.

Similar in appearance to a very dark brown almost black mallard the Black Duck is not generally found west of the Great Lakes but has been seen frequently in Eastern Manitoba and along the west coast of Hudson Bay.

The streaky coloration on the face and the silvery sheen on the underwing surfaces are distinctive markings of the Black Duck. It is wary and not easily decoyed. When starting into flight the Black Duck springs powerfully upward for a height of 8 or 10 feet then flies directly and swiftly.

Recognized throughout the eastern portion of the continent as a valuable game bird the Black Duck appears to be increasing in Manitoba but the number of this species taken annually does not figure largely in the Manitoba sportsman's bag.



BALDPATE

Clamator leucorhynchus Length 18" Tail 10" Wing 12" Alar extent 24" 25 inches weight 10 1/2 lbs. It breeds in the woods and the water, most on grassy slopes of the mountains. It is probably 1425 dove.

The Baldpate, known also as the American Widgeon, is a large bird that breeds extensively in the woods. It lives both on the water and is colorful and handsome when in full plumage. Highly nervous and easily frightened it takes readily to flight with a vertical sound. On the other hand in some ways the Baldpate is a bold duck and has been called the pirate of the water, as a result of its habit of robbing diving ducks and even of the cherry monkeys they bring to the surface. Its own food consists mainly of vegetation from the marshes or even grass from the fields. Cherry orilla, muskrat, etc.

The Baldpate is sweet in habit and easily tamed by ducks although it is usually a water fowl and stays close to the shore during the day. Its call is a low whistle and a soft quack.



PINTAIL

Abundant breeding species. Length male up to 36 inches, female 34 inches, wingspread 32.5 inches, weight 11 to 24 pounds, speed of flight 50.65 m.p.h., age reached 12 years, nest on ground, eggs 9-12, incubation period 22 or 23 days.

Perhaps the most numerous of waterfowl because of its extremely wide breeding range and natural wariness, the Pintail is a favorite with Manitoba sportsmen. The dark brown head, long slender white neck, and long pointed tail of the drake make this handsome bird easily recognized.

The female Pintail is one of the most courageous of waterfowl when its young are endangered. Without regard for its own safety it often approaches trespassers and uses every means at its command to divert attention from its ducklings. The male, however, shows little interest in home and family during the incubation period, although it will on occasion help to raise the young.

Pond weeds and seeds of plants serve as food for the Pintail. Its voice consists of soft whistle and a low quack. It is not a noisy duck.



BLUE-WINGED TEAL

Abundant, breeding. Length 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ 16 inches; wingspread 24 31 inches; weight 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ 16 ounces; age record 4 years; nest on ground; eggs 6-12; incubation period 21-23 days.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL

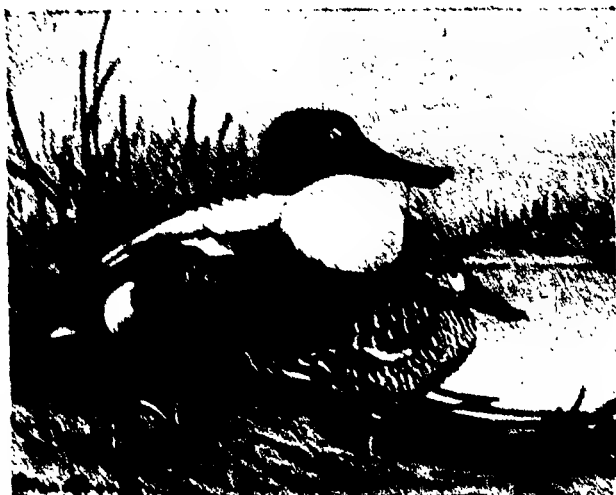
Common, breeding. Length 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; wingspread 22 24 inches; weight 10 14 ounces; age record 8 years; nest on ground; eggs 6-12; incubation period 21-23 days.

Swift, unpredictable flight is characteristic of Teal. The Green-winged Teal is the smallest of Canadian ducks, and the Blue-winged Teal is only slightly larger. They are easily decoyed and when flying in flocks often provide an easy target.

Feeding in marshes and ponds, the diet of the Teal is almost entirely vegetable, consisting of plants and their seeds. Teal are highly prized as table delicacies.

The Green-winged is the earlier migrant in the spring and remains north until October, usually a month later than its Blue-winged relative.

Calls of the Green-winged Teal include chirping notes and whistles. The female has a weak quack. The Blue-winged bird is usually silent, although the male may utter a high whistling peep and the female a faint quack.



THE SHOVELLER

Plamus boschas. Length 22.5 inches, wing spread 24.5 inches, weight 7.5 pounds. Age period 5 1/2 years, sexed at light 4 1/2 months, nest on ground, eggs 6-14 incubation period 25-30 days.

The large spoon-shaped bill with its fine-combed striations gives the shoveller a highly distinctive field mark. The bill is useful for surface feeding and for scooping up mud and core from the bottom of marshes and ponds and using it to catch insects, molluscs and crustaceans.

Sportsmen do not rank the Shoveller very high as a game bird. It is a small duck and its table qualities are not generally good, perhaps due to the high proportion of animal food in its diet, often higher than one-third of the total. On this wing the beautiful male bird is often mistaken and killed for a Mallard.

The Shoveller arrives late and migrates early. Usually it is a silent bird in the spring, however, the male has low cultural notes like female a feeble quack.



WOOD DUCK

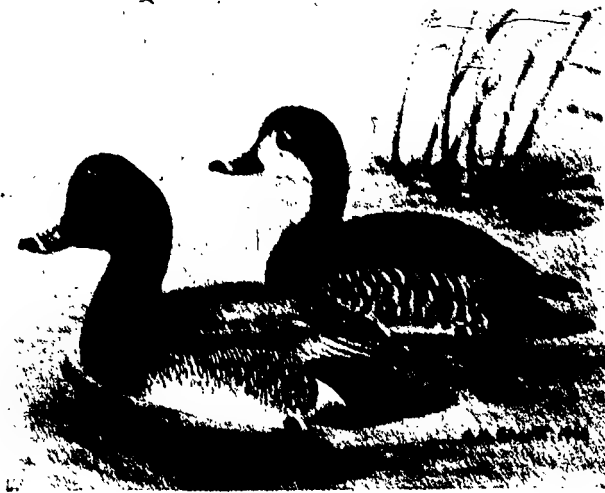
One breeding season in the western part of the province. Length 17 1/2 inches, wingspread 24 inches, weight 1 1/2 pounds. One record 8 years. Nest in a hollow trunk or limb of a tree that usually is standing in water. Eggs 8-10, incubation period 28-30 days.

The Wood Duck is one of the rarest and most beautiful of all ducks found in Manitoba. The brilliant crested head, white throat and dark ruddy chest of the male are unmistakable. The female is more highly colored than females of most species.

This woodland duck nests in natural cavities in hollow trees or in unused woodpecker holes. Its diet is almost entirely vegetable and includes berries and acorns as well as the more conventional pondweeds and seeds.

This is not the bird commonly called, wood duck, on the Prairies. The birds to which this name is often applied are the Buffle head and the Golden-eye which also nest in trees.

When on the water, the drake sits proud and alert. It emits a variety of calls from clucks to mellow whistles. Once nearly extinct, the Wood Duck has for many years been protected by legislation.



REDHEAD

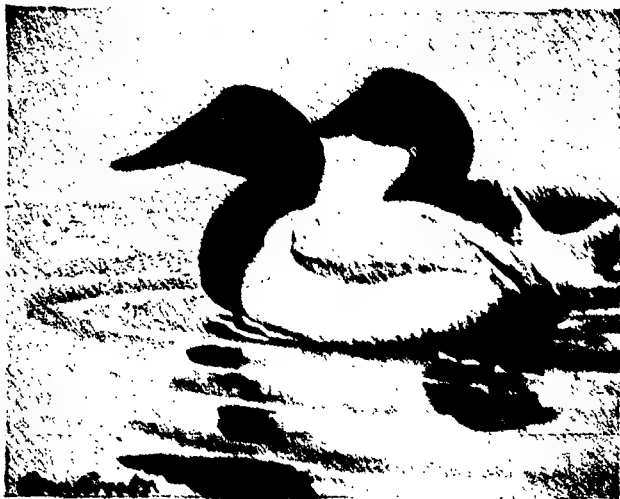
Common throughout in Manitoba from north to 55° N.
 Length 17 1/2 inches wing spread 32 3/4 inches weight
 14 3/4 pounds recorded record of 18 mphy also record
 16 1/2 voans nest in trees over water of lakes and
 marshes eggs 6 1/2 incubation period 22 1/4 days.

The Redhead is similar in habits and appearance to the Canvas-back and its flesh is just as highly prized as a table delight. Although a diving duck, nine tenths of its food is vegetable mostly leaves and stems of aquatic plants.

It is distinguished from the Canvas-back by its slightly smaller size, darker back and by the outline of the head. The bill of the Redhead is rather slender and concave, with the forehead rising abruptly.

Hunters in Manitoba consider the Redhead one of the most important of game birds. It is readily decoyed which accounts to some extent for the serious decrease in its numbers over the past two decades.

Redheads migrate in V shaped formations. On the wing they are generally more erratic than the Canvas Back. The male makes a low "me-ow" sound; the female is content with a loud quack.



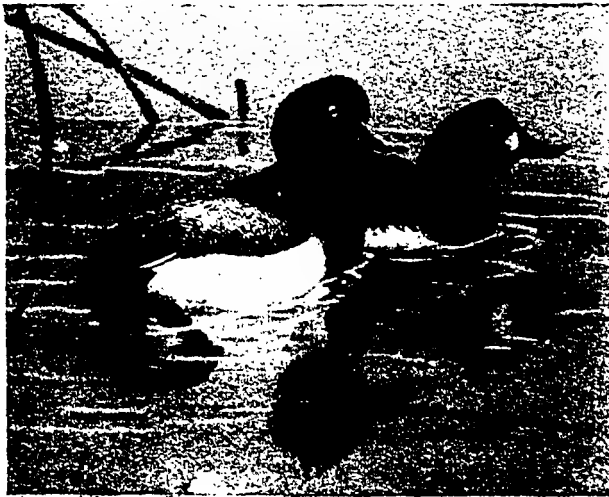
CANVASBACK

Canvasbacks are found in large numbers along the
 The Great Lakes. They are winged 31 to 33 inches
 weight 12 pounds. Their tail is 18 to 20 inches
 long. Their legs are 10 to 12 inches long. Their
 feet are 10 to 12 inches long.

In Maryland the canvasback is among the most famous of ducks
 esteemed for its excellent table qualities no less than for the fine sport
 it offers hunters. Its flesh is exceedingly succulent and delicious
 especially because of the predominance of wild celery in its diet.

The Canvasback is large, having an average weight of about
 thirty pounds. Nevertheless it is a difficult bird to hunt. Considered
 to be the swiftest form of duck it migrates in large V-shaped flocks.
 It is generally wary and clever and does not decoy although for a short
 time after it arrives in any area it remains unusually susceptible to decoys.
 Many Canvasbacks do not breed.

In the fall the large flocks keep together on open water except for
 marshes feeding morning and evening. Chattering and growling noises
 are sometimes emitted by the birds.



LESSER SCAUP

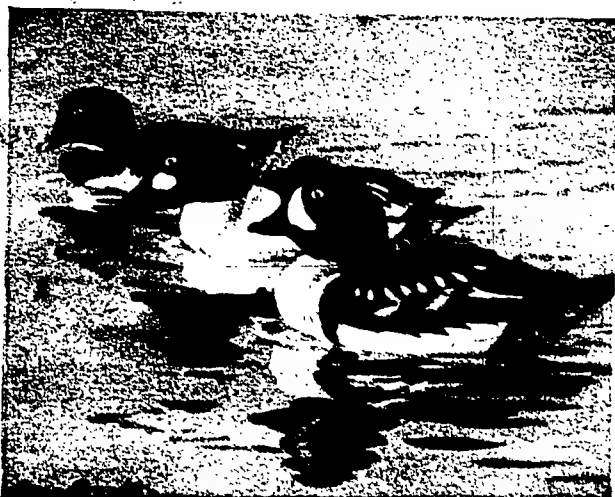
Abundant migrant and common breeding species. Length 15-18 inches; weight 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -2 pounds; recorded age 10 years; nest on ground, near water; eggs 6-15; incubation period "probably 3 to 4 weeks."

The Lesser Scaup is distinguished from its cousin the Greater Scaup by its slightly smaller size and more southerly nesting range. The larger bird is not common in Manitoba.

The flight of the Lesser Scaup is usually swift and unpredictable. It is a restless, nervous bird both in flight and on the water. When feeding it remains lively and alert to trespassers. It is a powerful swimmer and an excellent diver.

Many hunters consider the bluebill a good table bird though its flesh is admittedly not up to the high quality of the Canvas-back or Redhead. Although the diet of many of these birds is exclusively vegetable, generally about forty per cent consists of animal matter.

Readily decoyed, it provides excellent hunting sport. It is usually a silent bird, though the male occasionally emits a soft "purr," or, when surprised, a harsh "scaup."



AMERICAN GOLDEN-EYE

Fairly common; breeds. Length 16½-23 inches; wingspread 27-32 inches; weight 1½-2¼ pounds; recorded speed of flight 50 m.p.h.; nest in hollows in stumps, trees, and even buildings; eggs 5-19; incubation period 20 days.

Applly known as the "whistler" because of the vibrant whistling of its wings in flight, this medium-sized duck is not commonly hunted in Manitoba, although its breeding range extends over all but the most northern portion of the Province. The fact that few Golden-eyes are taken in Manitoba is probably due to an extreme wariness which keeps it safely out of range if it notices the slightest imperfection in the hunter's camouflage. It is not sought after as a table bird, its flesh being generally inferior to many other waterfowl common to Manitoba.

The Golden-eye nests in trees or stumps. This habit has often caused it to be erroneously called "Wood Duck." Between 70 and 90 per cent of its food is animal matter, obtained usually by diving. Although not a voluble bird its cry is clear and penetrating.



WHITE-WINGED SCOTER

Common; breeds. Length $19\frac{1}{2}$ -23 inches; wing-spread, $33\frac{1}{2}$ -41 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; weight 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -4 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds; nest on ground; eggs 5-14.

Although Scoter or "Coot" shooting is considered excellent sport in the New England States, the White-winged Scoter is little favored by Manitoba hunters. Sportsmen do not regard its flesh very highly, probably because its diet consists almost entirely of animal matter.

The White-winged Scoter is a big, heavily built duck that appears black with a white wing-patch. It arises from the water with a lumbering run and until under way it flies slowly and with labored movements. Once on the wing its flight is swift and direct. It is a powerful bird, and, when wounded, is able to swim under water for very great distances.

In fall, the White-winged Scoter gathers in big flocks, mostly on the open water of large lakes. Although usually not a voluble bird, when in flight it often makes a series of low whistles, having a distinctly bell-like quality.



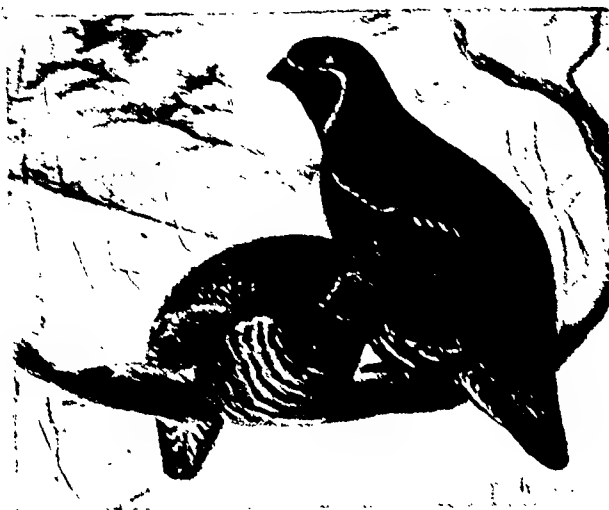
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

Common migrant; breeds in the north and east. Length 20-25 inches; wingspread 31-35 inches; weight 2-2½ pounds; nest on ground near water; often in a rocky crevice or amongst thick vegetation; eggs 6-12; incubation period 26-28 days.

This beautiful bird is easily identified by its thin black head the length of which is accentuated by a scraggy double crest, by its pronounced white collar and brown chest and its red saw-toothed bill which gives it the name "saw-bill."

Its diet has given it another name, "fish duck." Though a small amount of other animal matter is often consumed, the Red-breasted Merganser feeds almost exclusively on fish. As a result, its flesh is little prized for eating purposes and in Manitoba the bird is not eagerly sought after by sportsmen.

It has considerable difficulty in rising from the water or ground and on calm days only strenuous efforts lift it into the air. It is at home even in the roughest water and dives with great power and agility. Other than an occasional croak the Red-breasted Merganser is an extremely silent bird.



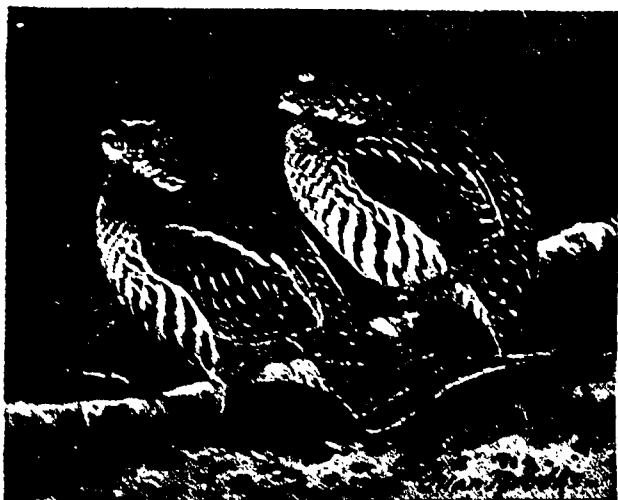
SPRUCE GROUSE

Common resident in spruce country. Length 15-17 inches. Nest on ground usually at foot of trees. Eggs 4-5 incubation period 12 days.

In Manitoba the Spruce Grouse is found as far south as the most southerly forest growth and north to the head of the central lakes. Its numbers are probably not large except in the more remote sections of the Province.

The Spruce Grouse has been named 'lool hen' because of its apparent unwariness. It will sit up in a spruce and allow one to walk up to it while it peers, twists its neck and looks trustingly at the intruder. Sometimes it can be knocked over with a stick or caught in a snare at the end of a sapling.

In winter it feeds on needles and buds of spruces and other conifers. This fare makes its flesh strong and unsuitable for the table. In summer and fall it has a more varied diet including insects and berries.



RUFFED GROUSE

Common; resident; chiefly in hardwood country north to Thicket Portage. Length 15½-19 inches; wingspread 22-26 inches; weight 1-1½ pounds; recorded speed of flight 22 m.p.h.; nest on ground; eggs 7-14; incubation period 24 days.

The Ruffed Grouse or "partridge" as it is more commonly called is a bird of the hardwood brush. Distinguished from the sharp-tailed grouse by the broad tail and black ruff feathers of the neck, this bird offers some of the best sport of any of the upland birds. In areas where it is "educated" by much shooting, it lies close in the underbrush, flushes powerfully with a tremendous explosive whirr and generally puts a tree between itself and the gunner. In many of the remoter regions, the Ruffed Grouse has not had the opportunity to learn the vital lesson of alertness and remains as tame as the Spruce Grouse.

In the spring, the dull throb of its drumming may be heard. The cock bird, standing, perhaps on a fallen log, beats its wings rapidly against the air to produce this distinctive mating call.



SHARP-TAILED GROUSE

PINNATED GROUSE

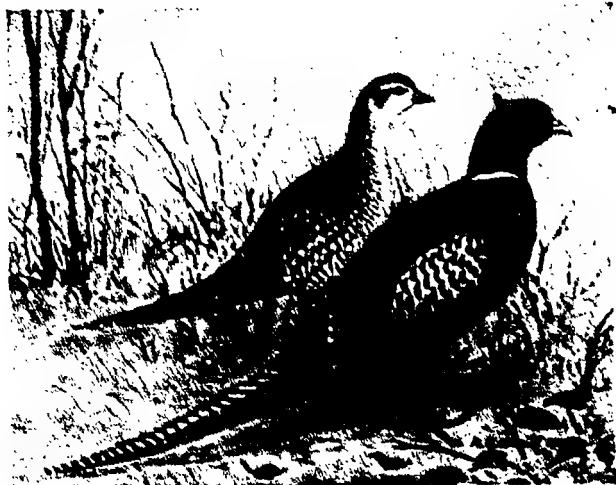
Variable in number, resident. Length 18 inches; nest on ground. Eggs of Sharp-tailed Grouse 11/4; incubation period 21 days. Pinnated Grouse eggs 1 1/2; incubation period 13 to 21 days.

The Pinnated Grouse or Prairie Chicken is the true bird of the open prairie country. Although the Sharp-tail is often called Prairie Chicken, it is more a bird of the brush land and lightly timbered areas. The Pinnated Grouse is easily distinguished by the neck plumes, the bars instead of arrow heads on the breast, and the square instead of pointed tail.

Good table qualities combined with a natural alertness and powerful flight have made these birds favorites with Manitoba hunters.

At mating time numbers of the birds gather at courting grounds apparently used year after year. The males inflate the bright orange air sacs on either side of the neck, at the same time erecting their neck plumes and opening their tails over their backs. The birds then strut and boom in an elaborate and striking mating ritual.

The grouse in general are subject to a ten year cycle of decline and increase the causes of which remain a mystery.



RING-NECKED PHEASANT

Introduced and thriving in the south. Length male 33 inches female 29 inches. Weight 3½-4½ pounds. Nest on ground, usually in nest of some other bird in trees. Eggs 6-7. incubation period 23-25 days.

The Ring-necked Pheasant has been introduced into Manitoba in recent years and has established itself successfully in the southern portion of the Province. Because of its elaborate coloration and other distinctive features, there is little likelihood of its being mistaken for any other bird. The cock bird, especially, with its burnished plumage and long sweeping tail, is a bird of striking beauty.

In winter Ring-necked Pheasants may be brought close about farm houses if grain be put out for them. As game birds they provide excellent sport. The cock is a large bird and the equal of any both as a trophy and as a culinary delicacy. Pheasants do not lie well before a dog but run far and fast. Noisy birds when flushed. Ring-necks are wary, wise, and well able to take care of themselves.



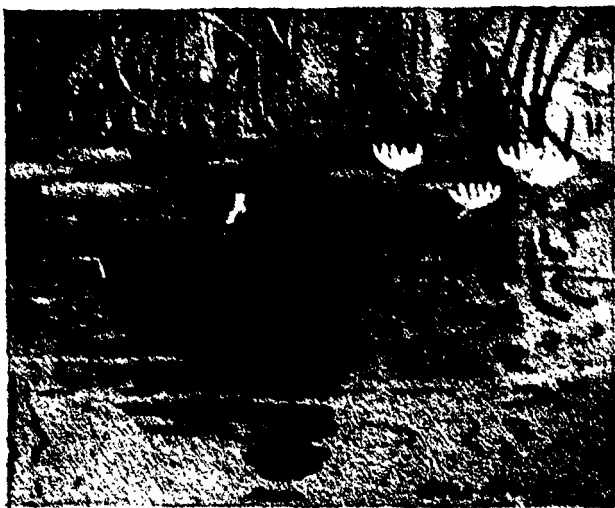
SORA RAIL

Common. breeds. Length 21 9/16 inches; wingspread 12 1/4 inches; weight 3-4 ounces; nest in marsh or meadow, supported above water by grass stems, and concealed by grass tops; eggs 4-17; incubation period about 14 days.

The small, dull-colored Sora Rail is distinguished from the Virginia Rail by its short bill and grey breast, and from the Yellow Rail by its larger size. Its coloration is not unusually distinctive though the feathers have an olive tint and its back is striped with white instead of the usual white bars.

Most people know this shy, secretive bird by its varied calls rather than by sight. Although common in the marshes, like many rails it is an inveterate skulker in the marsh grasses. Its notes include a soft whistle and a high piercing screech. Its mating call consists of a high-pitched whistling note which descends from high in the scale.

When flushed, the flight of the Sora Rail is slow and weak. With legs dangling, it flaps a short distance to drop again into the reeds.



COOT

Abundant birds north to The Pass. Length 14-16 inches, wingspread 22-28 inches, weight 1-1 1/2 pounds. Feed a hour at a time, half afloat or on ground near water. Eggs 6-12, incubation period about 27 days.

Few hunters mistake the coot for any other bird. At times, however, and especially when it is seen from a distance on the water, it resembles a duck. It is a slate gray bird with the coloration deepening to a black head. Its white bill blends into a white frontal shield with a reddish brown base. It has seven toes and distinctive scalloped webs on its toes. When walking, its head bobs gracefully.

Most of the time the coot swims about like a duck. In the fall, many gather into large flocks which rest far out on the open water, resembling immense black rats. Few hunters regard it favorably as a game bird. When startled into flight, it takes a long, spattering run over the surface of the water before it gets up enough speed for its wings to carry it.



WILSON SNIFE

More or less common breeder. Length 12 1/2-13 1/4 inches; bill is 2 1/2-3 inches long; wingspread 16-20 inches; weight 35 ounces; nest on ground; well concealed in marsh; eggs 3-4; incubation period about 20 days.

This small, extremely long-billed bird breeds throughout a large portion of Manitoba though it favors grassy meadowland and marshes. With many sportsmen the Wilson Snipe is a favorite. It is rarely seen on the ground. Lying close often until almost stepped upon, it flushes with a startling "scaup-scaup" call and darts swiftly away on an erratic course, making a difficult and fascinating target. It is too small a bird to be much sought after for food.

In spring the whinewing of the Snipe sounds day and night over its breeding marshes. This hollow whistling love call can often be heard even though the bird has circled high in the air and disappeared from sight. In fall loose flocks of a dozen or more gather in favorite runs or swamps where they find good probing for their long bills.

THE WATERFOWL FLYWAYS

For many years Manitoba nature enthusiasts have watched the ducks and geese winging high overhead, travelling to northern breeding grounds in the spring and to the warm south in the fall. As the observers' eyes followed the flocks, they must often have sought to fathom the mystery of these migrations which carry the birds so many thousands of miles each year. What deep stirring prompts them to beam their semi-annual flights? What inner sense guides them year upon year to the same breeding marshes and the same southern wintering grounds?

These questions at present remain unanswered. But many other things have been discovered about the migrations. Since banding became common, experts have been able to trace the routes of ducks and geese. They found that most wild waterfowl show a definite preference for the breeding areas, the wintering places and even the intermediate resting and feeding grounds which they had previously visited. Birds have been captured and recaptured in successive years in the same locality and at approximately the same time.

From these studies a definite concept of the whole process of migration has gained currency. This concept recognizes that waterfowl fly along flyways and migration routes. The two terms are not synonymous. A flyway is a geographical region along which many species fly; it comprises wintering grounds in the south and breeding areas in the north and is an area of considerable width. In any flyway there may be many individual migration routes. These routes are the paths, within the flyway along which one or more species fly between north and south. Often the migration routes are clearly defined by geographical features, such as valleys or coastlines; others are broad and apparently do not have definite boundaries. In fact, in both the flyways and the migration routes there is considerable overlapping and new factors are continually being brought to light to alter the picture.

Four main flyways, each with its own duck and goose population carry wildfowl north and south over this continent. They are the Atlantic, the Mississippi, the Central and the Pacific flyways.

THE CENTRAL FLYWAY



This flyway is commonly called the Great Plains Flyway for it includes a large part of the wheat growing area of both Canada and the United States. The easternmost migration route of the Central Flyway carries thousands of ducks and geese directly through Manitoba. To a great extent the eastern boundary of the United States follows the entire of the Missouri River. The flyway is of almost uniform width throughout its entire length, unlike the others which take the form of a funnel wide in the north and extremely narrow in the south.

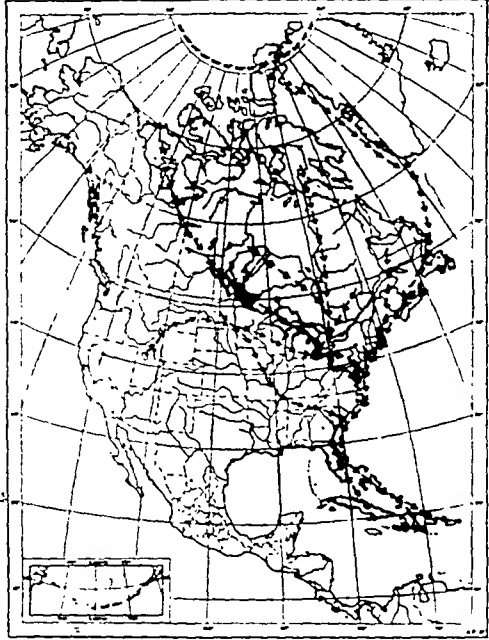
THE MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

The eastern boundary of the Mississippi flyway may be more or less sharply defined. Following the eastern shoreline of Hudson Bay it passes through southern Ontario and southward to the Mississippi Valley which it follows to the Gulf. The western section of the flyway, which carries the largest waterfowl population, merges with the Central Flyway. The most important migration routes commence in Alaska and the Territories and sweep down through the central plains portion, early through the prairie and lake country of Manitoba. These routes carry a heavy concentration of Mallards, Pintails and Canada Geese.



THE ATLANTIC FLYWAY

One of the important migration routes of this flyway passes through the lake country of northern Manitoba and moves in a southeasterly direction across the Great Lakes to the eastern coast of the United States. Here it joins with other routes and continues south. Canada Geese, Canvas-backs and Redheads follow this northwestern migration pathway. There are at least two interesting tributaries of the main Atlantic flyway. One begins in Utah, continues north, east, and south-east to the coast while the other seems to leave the Mississippi flyway and pass over the mountains to the eastern coast.



THE PACIFIC FLYWAY



The Pacific flyway is the only one of the four principal flyways that does not touch Manitoba. Most of the ducks and geese that follow the western migration routes into the United States have their breeding grounds in Eastern Alaska or in the area of the Mackenzie Valley in north-western Canada. Pintails and Widgeon, among the most important game birds for sportsmen of the west coast States, travel down from these regions. The interior breeding grounds of British Columbia apparently do not send many birds farther south than the State of Washington.

PART TWO

GAME ANIMALS

INTRODUCTION

Big game hunting has become an important sport in Manitoba. Hunters, whether they reside in the Province or visit Manitoba from the United States or neighboring Provinces, find in its forests many of those wilderness virtues only relatively unhunted areas possess. The forestland of Manitoba is being re-discovered as a haunt of many species of game.

Hunters are aware of the large number of forested regions on this continent which, though formerly sustaining abundant big game, today are almost barren of all wildlife. In general, any area that enjoys good game animal resources faces the same danger. At least four factors are important: first, the encroachment of population; second, too liberal hunting laws and regulations; third, lack of game preserves; and fourth, unsympathetic hunters.

In the majority of Manitoba's forested regions there will be little danger of human population driving out big game population for many years. Further, hunting in Manitoba has been rigidly controlled in order to preserve the natural rate of increase of forest game. Both provincial and federal governments maintain game preserves, notably in the southern portion of the Whiteshell Provincial Park and in the Riding Mountain National Park. In these areas, wild game ranges unmolested.

Beyond this, hunters themselves must be keenly aware of the necessity for conservation, and of the steps being taken to preserve game resources. They must deepen their understanding of the problems of game management. By those means they will find themselves in possession of a conception of their sport which is at once less ruthless and personally more enjoyable.

Knowledge is power. Knowledge of the habits of big game and of conservation methods is power to provide better sport for more hunters and at the same time keep animals in their forest homeland.



MOOSE

Common in less settled timbered areas. Length 9-10 feet; tail 2-3 inches; ear about 10 inches; height at shoulder up to 6-7 feet; weight up to 1000-1500 pounds; mating season September; young born in May; young, 1., often 2.

The Moose is the largest of our deer. Its great size and majestic bearing have made it the most prized quarry of both woodsmen and big game hunters. Those who live from the forest look upon the Moose as one of the staple sources of meat. Anyone who has tasted delicious moose steaks will understand this. Sportsmen consider the Moose the most magnificent trophy they can secure. The massive palmated antlers on the huge head often attain a width of five feet or more across.

For food the Moose eats the browse, twigs, and leaves of many hardwoods, and, upon occasion, will eat grass. It depends for safety almost entirely upon a marvellously acute sense of hearing and smell. Once confronted, especially by wolves, it makes good use of its antlers and strong legs and hooves to beat off its assailants.



WHITE-TAILED OR VIRGINIA DEER

Common north to The Pas. Length up to 6-7 feet; tail 11-12 inches; ear about 9 inches; weight up to 200-300 pounds; mating season October, November, antlers shed in January; young born April or May; young, 1, or more often 2.

The White-tail is the common deer of the Province, frequenting the bushland and hardwood forest. It is easily distinguished from the Mule Deer by its distinctive antlers each of which has one main beam curving back and then gracefully forward, with the tines or prongs branching from it. Its tail is considerably longer than that of the Mule Deer.

The White-tail often prefers the fringes of settlement where man protects it from many of its foes. Its range is small, a few hundred acres providing a year-round home for a whole family of White-tails. Unlike other species it apparently does not migrate. Although it possesses an acute sense of hearing and smell, its eyesight is not good.

When alarmed, a buck may give a startled snort before dashing away, its white tail flashing like a beacon through the trees.

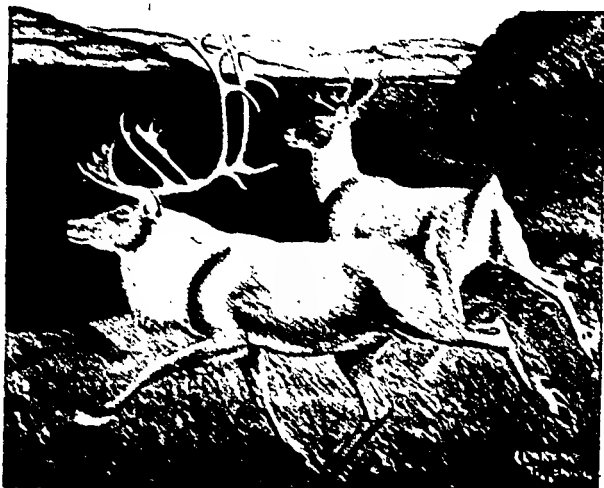


MULE DEER

Common southern Mammals. Length up to 54 inches; antlers about 7 inches; ear about 10 inches; weight 200-300 pounds. Mate in November; young born in May or June 1, 2 or rarely 3 young.

The Mule Deer is shorter in length though often just as heavy as the White-tail. The antlers of the buck with tines on upright prongs distinguish it from the unbranched upright prongs of the White-tailed Deer. When hornless either the long mule-like ears or the tail is the best distinguishing characteristic. The tail is small, mostly white and with a black tip, while the tail of the White-tail is large, dark above and with a white ring. When bounding away from the hunter the Mule Deer droops its tail instead of waving it like a flag as the White-tail does.

Although usually a silent animal the Mule Deer snorts and blows when curious and when alarmed gives a high-pitched snort which sounds like a whistle. It is also known as the "lumper" from its bounding gait when frightened.



BARREN GROUND CARIBOU

Common south to the vicinity of The Pas in winter. Length up to 6½ feet; tail 8 inches; weight up to 325-400 pounds; mate in late October; horns shed in December (male) in spring (female) young usually one born in June.

The Barren Ground (sometimes 'Barrenland') Caribou is generally smaller than the Woodland Caribou and lighter grey in color. Like all caribou it is well adapted to northern conditions. Its hooves are natural snowshoes for hard-crusted snow. Its legs are like stilts for use in soft snow.

This Caribou is found in bands throughout the year, but it is in winter that the big herds form and come down out of the Arctic barren grounds into the edge of timber. They often cross the Hudson Bay Railway and have been known to cause considerable train delays on that northern line.

The Barren Ground Caribou is completely unpredictable in its actions and as a result is often considered stupid and erratic. In summer its food includes grasses and various herbs; in winter it commonly eats the grey lichens known as 'Caribou Moss'.



WOODLAND CARIBOU

The status of the large Woodland Caribou in Manitoba is not thoroughly understood. It is not common in the Province. When it does appear it is an animal of open spruce forest, swamp and muskeg.

Caribou differ from all our other deer in that the females have antlers as well as the males though those of the females are smaller. Female Woodland Caribou do, however, sometimes remain hornless. A grunt is the only vocal sound of the Caribou. A peculiar clicking made by the hooves when it walks is one of the most unusual sounds made by any animal.

Adult males may be distinguished from those of the Barren Ground Caribou by their larger size, their massive antlers with flattened beams and their dark nearly black color. In late summer this coloration fades greatly and the Woodland Caribou takes on much the same aspect as the Barren Ground Caribou.



ELK

The elk is also known as the wapiti. At present they are found mainly in the Rocky Mountain States, but are also found in the Cascade Range, in the Pacific Northwest. The largest elk in the world lived in the Cascade Range, and was killed in 1911. It was a bull, and weighed 2,000 pounds. Its antlers were 6 feet long, and 18 inches in diameter at the base. It was the largest elk ever killed in the United States.

The elk of Wapiti has decreased in numbers in Montana in recent years as a result of a long term program of conservation. It is a large, majestic-looking animal, and the same extreme antlers that match its distended horns. The antlers are extremely wide, and measure more than five feet across, with curved tines branching from them symmetrically.

In color, the elk is usually chestnut brown on the head and back, a brighter reddish brown on the breast, and a grey crown on the rest of the body. It has a extremely large white disk surrounding the eye.

The behavior of the bull elk in the fall is the signal that the mating season has commenced and the male is receptive to either his harem or wives about him. The elk is the most magnificent of our deer.



BLACK BEAR

Common in timbered areas. Length up to 5½ feet; tail 4 inches; height at shoulder 24-26 inches; weight up to 300 (and more) pounds. Mating season June, young born while female is in hibernation in January; young 1-4 in number; the female has young only every other year. Hibernates from November or December to March or April.

The Black Bear is distributed over all Manitoba with the exception of the prairie region. It is a solitary animal. Only rarely are adult bears seen together.

When tame, the Black Bear is a clown; to the farmer and woodsman it is troublesome and destructive for it robs the pig sty and destroys caches of food and canoes. But contrary to popular belief it is not an unusually fierce and dangerous animal. Indeed hunters find the Black Bear one of the shyest of forest creatures. Many consider themselves fortunate if they obtain a good view of the animal.

The Black Bear has magnificently developed senses of hearing and smell and will take flight readily although the hunter is far away. On the other hand its eyesight is poor.

A good-sized bear in Manitoba provides an excellent trophy for it will often weigh up to 300 pounds.



LIST OF GAME BIRDS AND ANIMALS OCCURRING IN MANITOBA

A check indicates that species mentioned is found in Manitoba but is not now seen in detail in this book

GESE

Page

Canada Goose, <i>Branta canadensis</i> . Common in migration; breeds mainly in the north; three subspecies occur as follows: the "Honker," <i>Branta canadensis canadensis</i> ; the middle-sized Lesser Canada Goose, <i>Branta canadensis leucophaea</i> , and the diminutive Richardson's Goose, <i>Branta canadensis richardsoni</i> ; the last two are migrants only	10
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Hooded Merganser, <i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i> . Not uncommon; breeds	•
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Woodland Caribou, <i>Rangifer carolinensis</i> . Not common; the wooded portions of the province	42
Elk or Wapiti, <i>Cervus canadensis</i> . Found in and around Riding Mountain National Park, in Duck Mountain and Poremba Forest Reserves, and in the Interlake district. In 1911 there were an estimated 13,000 elk in the province	43

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White-tailed Jack Rabbit, <i>Lepus leucurus</i> . Occurs in the south	.



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